UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/50/276
11 July 1995
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH/FRENCH

Fiftieth session
Item 70 (e) of the preliminary list*

GENERAL AND COMPLETE DISARMAMENT: TRANSPARENCY IN ARMAMENTS

Report of the Secretary-General

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* A/50/50/Rev.1.

95-20573 (E) 250795 270795 280795

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The General Assembly on 15 December 1994, adopted resolution 49/75 C, the relevant operative part of which reads as follows:

> "The General Assembly,
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> ...
>
> "4. Decides, with a view to further development of the Register, to keep the scope of and participation in the Register under review, and, to this end:
>
> "(a) Requests Member States to provide the Secretary-General with their views on the continuing operation of the Register and its further development and on transparency measures related to weapons of mass destruction;
>
> ...
>
> "8. Also requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session on progress made in implementing the present resolution;".

2. On 15 March 1995, the Secretary-General addressed a note verbale to Member States requesting them to provide their views pursuant to paragraph 4 (a) above. Replies received from Governments on the matter are reproduced in section II of the present report.

II. REPLIES RECEIVED FROM GOVERNMENTS

FRANCE

(on behalf of the European Union)

[Original: French]

[31 May 1995]

1. With reference to paragraph 4 (a) of General Assembly resolution 49/75 C, the European Union would like to provide its views to the Secretary-General on the continuing operation of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and its further development and on transparency measures related to weapons of mass destruction.

2. Considerable progress has been made in the area of nuclear arms control and disarmament and in the banning of chemical and biological weapons. It is time to strike a better balance in the attention devoted to controlling weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons. Stockpiles of conventional weapons

disproportionate to self-defence needs are having a destabilizing effect in many parts of the world.

3. The increased importance of transparency in the transfer and possession of conventional arms and the growing international interest in such transparency are justified by the fact that such weapons are virtually untouched by existing legislation and can cause serious human suffering.

4. The European Union is convinced that transparency in armaments is an important factor in creating an atmosphere of confidence between States, particularly at the regional level.

5. The European Union believes that the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is an important mechanism because it provides data on international transfers of those categories of conventional weapons that can be used for offensive purposes and are therefore potentially destabilizing. The operation of the Register thus far has been encouraging. During the past two years some 90 States, including all the members of the European Union, have submitted national statements to the Register. These statements covered the bulk of the international weapons trade.

6. In order to enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations Register as a global confidence-building measure, every effort should be made to secure the widest possible participation. The European Union would like to encourage all States Members of the United Nations to submit their national data to the Register in the coming years. In this connection, the European Union wishes to stress that even "nil" reports are an important contribution to the success of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

7. The European Union believes that the inclusion of data on military holdings and procurement through national production will make the Register more complete and useful. Accordingly, the European Union invites the States Members of the United Nations to submit data on their military holdings and procurement through national production.

8. In order to ensure that the Register responds to evolving security needs, it is important that its operation be evaluated in the future. The European Union welcomes the review, in 1997, of the continuing operation of the Register and its further development by the Secretary-General, with the assistance of a group of governmental experts, in accordance with paragraph 4 (b) of resolution 49/75 C. The European Union expresses the hope that all States will cooperate to make this review a success.

9. Pursuant to the request embodied in the resolutions on transparency in armaments adopted over the years, the Conference on Disarmament has devoted two sessions to a discussion of ways and means of enhancing transparency in armaments in its Ad Hoc Committee on Transparency in Armaments. Although the Conference has yet to reach agreement on specific measures or recommendations for enhancing such transparency, a better understanding of these issues seems to be emerging. It is for this reason that the European Union attaches considerable importance to the resumption of the work of the Ad Hoc Committee as soon as possible.

10. The European Union would like to emphasize that transparency measures related to weapons of mass destruction are different in nature from transparency measures related to conventional weapons. In order to build confidence and increase stability, transparency measures related to weapons of mass destruction should be an element of both arms control and disarmament.

11. The European Union's goal is full implementation of the bans on chemical, biological and toxin weapons. Transparency measures can be a step towards that goal. Reference may be made here to the obligations set out in the chemical weapons Convention to declare stocks of chemical weapons and chemical weapons production facilities immediately after entry into force. Within the framework of the Convention on biological and toxin weapons, States parties have agreed on a set of confidence-building measures aimed at ensuring greater transparency and openness of activities related to that Convention.

12. With regard to nuclear disarmament, the European Union reaffirms its commitment, in accordance with article VI of the non-proliferation Treaty, to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to nuclear disarmament, which continues to be its ultimate objective.

JAMAICA

[Original: English]

[9 May 1995]

1. The Conventional Arms Register, which was established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/36 L constitutes an important step forward in the promotion of transparency in military matters, and is an important contributor to confidence-building and the security of States in all regions.

2. Recognizing the importance of the Register, Jamaica has participated in the fulfilment of its objectives in the past and is supportive of the goals and objectives of the Register.

3. It is hoped that, in an effort to promote wider adherence, the Register would also be extended to include weapons of mass destruction, thereby creating a comprehensive document that would give an indication of the level of arms in existence world wide. With such a document, quantitative targets could be set for the reduction of conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction.

JAPAN

[Original: English]

[27 April 1995]

1. The Government of Japan contributed to the establishment of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms in order to promote regional and global disarmament. It has continued to make efforts to ensure that the system functions smoothly by participating in meetings of experts and by convening seminars, etc. The Government of Japan highly values this mechanism as a global confidence-building measure. So far, 91 countries have participated in the Register for 1992, and 88 countries have registered for 1993.

2. However, when one considers that there are 185 United Nations Member States, the above number of registrants is unacceptably low. The Government of Japan believes the Register would be even more meaningful if virtually every Member State registered consecutively each year. On three occasions in the past year Japan, through its embassies, has encouraged more than 70 countries to register. It considers that even those that do not export or import arms should make a "nil report" to indicate their commitment to the registration mechanism. The Government of Japan strongly hopes that many more countries will participate so as to render the mechanism universal.

3. Although the mechanism is not without its flaws - for example, the reports submitted are not always complete - it is succeeding in bringing to light arms transfers that were previously undetected. It is therefore important that the Register's universality be enhanced. Moreover, Japan hopes that the expert meeting to be convened in 1997 will address these issues, and that a decision will be made to expand the system to include the registration of military holding and national procurement of arms. In the meantime, Japan strongly hopes that countries will report this information on a voluntary basis. While the Register is targeted at conventional arms, the Government of Japan is of the opinion that the Conference on Disarmament and other appropriate forums should address the issue of weapons of mass destruction.

PHILIPPINES

[Original: English]

[13 April 1995]

1. The Philippine Government supports the continuing operation of the arms Register and its further development.

2. Moreover, the Philippine Government consistently submits a report on the export and import of conventional arms in compliance with its obligations as State party to the United Nations Register on Conventional Arms and in line with the implementation of United Nations General Assembly resolution 49/75 C.

SLOVENIA

[Original: English]

[16 May 1995]

1. The Government of Slovenia supports the continuing operation of the Register, which represents one of the most important means for strengthening transparency of armaments and thus contributes effectively to confidence-building on a global scale.

2. As such, the Register should be developed further, so that it would include military holdings and procurement through national production, both as additional categories equal to the existing ones (exports and imports). Furthermore, adequate steps should be taken to promote and facilitate universal and comprehensive reporting.

3. With regard to transparency measures related to weapons of mass destruction, the Government of Slovenia favours their further development within the framework of pertinent multilateral disarmament treaties and their verification bodies.

UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

[Original: English]

[28 April 1995]

1. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland strongly supports the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and is committed to its success. The United Kingdom believes that the Register is an important mechanism in promoting transparency in conventional arms that helps to prevent destabilizing accumulations of conventional arms. The Register is a valuable confidence-building measure to facilitate dialogue and improve security relations between States.

2. The United Kingdom agrees with the view expressed in the report of the Secretary-General on the continuing operation of the Register of 22 September 1994 that the level of participation in the Register in its first two years of operation has been encouraging, but that wider participation is important. The United Kingdom hopes that States will continue to participate and encourages States that have not in the past submitted returns to the Register to do so, to underscore the world community's interest in promoting transparency in armaments.

3. The United Kingdom also agrees with the Secretary-General that the Register is inherently flexible with the capacity to expand over time in the light of experience of its operation. The United Kingdom was pleased and honoured to have been represented on the Group of Governmental Experts which met in 1994. The United Kingdom regrets that the Group was unable to reach consensus on the expansion of the Register to include information on military holdings and

procurement from national production on the same basis as information on transfers. The United Kingdom believes that the inclusion of this information would increase the effectiveness of the Register in identifying destabilizing accumulations of conventional arms and hence in building confidence. The United Kingdom hopes this matter will be reconsidered by the Group of Governmental Experts that the Secretary-General was requested to convene in 1997 by resolution 49/75 C.

4. Resolution 49/75 C also asks for Member States' views on transparency measures related to weapons of mass destruction. The United Kingdom shares the view expressed in the report of the 1994 Group of Governmental Experts that the Register, which deals with conventional arms, is not an isolated measure, but complements wider efforts to promote confidence and transparency and to enhance global and regional security. The United Kingdom believes that the principle of transparency could apply to weapons of mass destruction. It fully supports the ongoing work on this subject in the Conference on Disarmament and in other forums, in which it will continue to play a full part.